



*Stryker vehicles from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, make their way down the USNS Shughart's gangplank in preparation to return to Fort Wainwright, Alaska. (Photo by John Pennell)*

# Building an Expeditionary Army for the Future

■ By Alvin Crowder and Charlie Brown

The Army must overcome the challenges of rapidly moving relatively large forces from the continental United States to distant locations to fight an informed and capable enemy. The Army must be able to employ sufficient, organized forces across all domains, in all environments, under all conditions, without relying solely on a robust reception and staging system. It must move toward becoming an expeditionary Army.

The preface of the U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World states that “the key to a Strategic Win is to present the enemy

with multiple dilemmas.” It goes on to say that “future forces operating as part of joint teams will conduct expeditionary maneuver through rapid deployment and transition to operations.”

The concept defines expeditionary as the “ability to deploy task-organized forces on short notice to austere locations” and being “capable of conducting operations immediately upon arrival.” It defines expeditionary maneuver as “the rapid deployment of task-organized combined arms forces able to transition quickly and conduct operations of sufficient scale and ample dura-

tion to achieve strategic objectives.”

The concept does not envision the Army conducting amphibious operations to establish lodgments against an armed and determined enemy, but the benefits of expeditionary maneuver, including rapid deployment, give a joint force commander excellent options for employing ground forces.

## Expeditionary Operations in World War II

The Army Operating Concept describes the Army's projected capabilities for the time frame of 2020 through 2040. But the same words

could have been written in the early 1940s, when the United States was fresh off a successful North African campaign and the decision was made to attack the “soft underbelly of Europe.”

In July 1943, 3,000 ships, 4,000 aircraft, 150,000 Allied troops, and heavy equipment including 600 tanks commenced Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily. The U.S. Army, as part of a joint and multinational team, executed expeditionary maneuver across the air and maritime domains and presented the enemy with multiple dilemmas.

The Allies carried out Operation Husky using strategic deception against a determined enemy. They complemented air and sea maneuver with air and naval fires in a coordinated attack that allowed a quick defeat of the enemy. The dilemmas provided by the maneuvering forces were too many to overcome, and the battles brought a quick end to Italy’s participation in the war.

### Today’s Challenges

The expeditionary maneuver quandary, like all resource quandaries, comes down to efficiency versus effectiveness, today’s real problems versus tomorrow’s potential problems, and the comfort of a system you know versus the uncertainty of a system you do not know.

The Army is designed to conduct sustained land operations that require the application of joint and combined arms movement and joint fires. Its forces are supported with a large deployment and sustainment footprint.

The Army is predominantly a heavy force, with 60 percent of its active divisions and 43 percent of its active and reserve maneuver brigade combat teams (BCTs) either mechanized or armored. Even company-sized units can burn hundreds of gallons of fuel per hour, and a single cannon artillery weapon system can consume almost 5,000 pounds of munitions and propellant per day.

The Army’s current paradigm for

deploying heavy forces consists of an administrative move focused on efficiency under absolute minimal threat or risk. Forces are deployed from strategic ports that allow the berthing of large vessels, some of which take up to three days to load or offload.

Oversized cargo planes deploy personnel and equipment far from home stations. They require a robust ground operation to ensure they are discharged and serviced quickly since the process will be repeated thousands of times during a large deployment.

As enemy capability increases and deployment potentially becomes contested, these safe harbor ports get farther away from the final destination, complicating the onward movement of forces. Support for the forces comes from the host nation, is pre-positioned, or is delivered from ships and planes likely using the same ports as were used for the deployment.

Long operational distances stress even the best-executed system; enemy actions or even adverse weather will make the situation worse. Having safe harbor ports of debarkation outside of enemy anti-access/area-denial capabilities makes onward movement capabilities essential.

### Cross-domain Movement

Cross-domain movement is affected by the capacity of transportation systems, not to mention the infrastructure that the systems must traverse.

*The ground domain.* Let’s consider the ground domain. A single armored BCT (ABCT) has almost 250 heavy armored vehicles, including tanks, armored fighting vehicles, self-propelled howitzers, ammunition carriers, and bridging and breaching vehicles.

There are 1,554 heavy equipment transporters (HETs) in modified table of organization and equipment units. All of the active duty HETs, if committed to a single operation, could move approximately 1½

ABCTs’ worth of heavy vehicles.

*The air domain.* The air domain is even more difficult. If airfields capable of accommodating a C-17 Globemaster aircraft were even available at the origin and destination, an ABCT would still require more than 500 C-17 sorties to move its vehicles, equipment, and personnel, not including supplies. The requirement to airlift a single ABCT requires more than two times as many C-17s as there are in the entire U.S. inventory.

*The sea domain.* Onward movement across water is even more challenging than moving across ground and air. The limiting factor for watercraft is usually volume, not mass. The same ABCT has well over 400,000 square feet of vehicles and equipment.

The Army currently has two types of watercraft for unit moves: the logistics support vessel (LSV) and the landing craft utility (LCU). The LSV is the larger of the two boats, with 10,500 square feet of deck space. The Army has 6 LSVs in the active component and two in the reserve component. The LCU has 2,500 square feet of cargo space; 10 LCUs are in the active component, and four are in the reserve component.

If all of the active and reserve LSVs and LCUs could be simultaneously crewed and were available to move an ABCT, it would still take more than four turns to close, assuming an 80 percent stow factor for the boats. An infantry BCT, presumably the lightest and most mobile maneuver BCT, requires almost three turns of all available watercraft.

### Are We Expeditionary?

Is today’s Army the expeditionary Army that we envision for the future? The Army has signaled that it will keep the BCT structure in the foreseeable future. The Army is proposing that the infantry BCT have even more equipment. The trend is to have heavier armor and more le-

thal (hence, bigger) munitions.

Any maneuver BCT will not likely deploy and operate as the lone ground force. A BCT is unlikely to operate independently because too much required Army capability resides outside of any maneuver BCT.

While the BCTs can change their organizations to allow them to operate semi-independently, there is a time frame right after deployment in which they have only a small fraction of their required supplies. A BCT requires a logistics source on the ground before it can get to an operational status. Adding capacity to the BCT does not negate this limitation.

The numbers indicate that if the Army wants to move the BCTs, it must activate reserve units and deploy those assets ahead of the BCTs. It must establish a sustainment apparatus in theater, again likely activating and deploying reserve forces. For the Army to fight an enemy that can employ lethal effects across operational distances, these sustainment organizations require protection and potentially fortified positions.

### Tomorrow's Opportunities

If decisive victory requires the deployment of multiple brigades, how can the Army become expeditionary and effective? The Army Operating Concept offers capabilities that will mitigate some of the problems, but it does not present an easily achievable method of getting there.

Reducing the logistics footprint required for operations is a common-sense means of becoming expeditionary, and the Army is committed to getting there by reducing demand. Reduced demand is not just sustainment, however.

Active protection systems can reduce armor requirements and, hence, fuel requirements; precision munitions or submunitions can hit targets more effectively; higher reliability not only reduces spare parts demand but builds combat power as a byproduct.

The Army must get to the point of deploying combat-configured per-

sonnel and equipment. Equipment is matched with personnel and supplies in a reception, staging, onward movement, and integration process that is too long. Sustainment forces have to set the theater before forces can arrive.

This model works well in secure rear areas or with sufficient host-nation or contracted support, but it would be less effective in other instances, such as austere or non-

After years of having a mature-theater force structure and secure lines of communication, the Army is changing into an expeditionary force that can conduct sustained operations in all domains.

permissive environments. Combat configured armored forces with full complements of supplies may require a top-to-bottom analysis of how, when, and where U.S. forces deploy.

The Army must be able to exploit the maritime domain as an avenue of approach. Deploying to a sea base, or even a close intermediate staging base, provides opportunities to defeat anti-access/area-denial measures and to present multiple dilemmas to an adversary.

Armored forces predominantly move over water, and the likely seaport of debarkation may be untenable. Having the ability to create a moving seaport of debarkation anywhere in the world that can effectively process a deployment is a potent capability. Regardless, the Army or joint force must have waterborne mobility to make sufficient and simultaneous maneuver from the sea practical.

The sea base alternative is likely expensive, dangerous, and demanding, but the payoff could enhance the Army's expeditionary capability. Besides permitting maneuver from an unexpected direction, the sea base

would allow movement to multiple entry points, the ability to mitigate enemy countermeasures, and the opportunity to employ combat configured forces while potentially reducing the on-ground logistics footprint.

The Army has a huge challenge ahead. It has a forward-deployed, mature-theater force structure with assumed secure lines of communica-

tion, and it is attempting to change that force into a continental United States-based expeditionary Army that still retains the ability to conduct sustained land operations.

It must move toward becoming an expeditionary Army. As Operation Husky proved, having an expeditionary Army that overcomes challenges and delivers lethal, survivable, and sustainable forces to positions of advantage can result in opportunities for quick and decisive victory.

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